

DECISION MEMO

WINNER CREEK TRAIL DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

GLACIER RANGER DISTRICT, CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST U.S. FOREST SERVICE

SUMMARY

In response to the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), the Chugach National Forest has identified critical infrastructure projects that will reduce its deferred maintenance backlog, enrich the visitor experience, protect resources, and enable increased access for all visitors, while contributing to the local economy. The Winner Creek Trail deferred maintenance is one such project. Multiple improvements of this trail are planned and are listed in the project details below.

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DETAILS

Deferred maintenance work will be completed along a short section of Winner Creek Trail and the first 3 miles of the adjacent Upper Winner Creek Trail. Most of this work will occur within the existing trail corridor. Work will be accomplished by the local Forest Service trail crew, using a combination of hand tools and a mini excavator. Deferred maintenance tasks include: decommissioning deteriorating step-and-run boardwalk segments and replacing them with turnpikes; widening 24" segments of tread to the national standard of 36"; repairing existing trail drainages and installing new drainages where erosion and/or puddling occur; constructing a 500' reroute to improve user compliance around an archeology site.

There are three areas where proposed work will be outside of the project area. There are two proposed borrow pit locations that are in alder thickets along the trail. Pits will be within 200' of the trail and will be obscured with vegetative screening. Gravel collected from these pits will be used to cap turnpike structures that will replace current segments of step-and-run boardwalk. Walls of borrow pits will be knocked down and filled with downed logs when work is complete. Additionally, there is a proposed 500' reroute to help protect a historic cabin site that is very near to the existing trail. In 2006 two alternative routes were proposed around this archeology site, and the one selected and constructed has had poor compliance from trail users due to its unintuitive up and down design, resulting in most users continuing to walk right through the cabin site. This project proposes to decommission this original reroute and instead construct the other alternative identified in 2006, which follows more of a sidehill contour and it is believed will better accommodate recreation users, especially those on bikes, and better protect the

heritage resource

DECISION TO BE IMPLEMENTED

I am authorizing the project to proceed as described above.

RATIONALE FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE DECISION

CATEGORY OF EXCLUSION

I have determined that this project falls within the categorical exclusion listed in 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(1) – *Construction and reconstruction of trails*.

FINDING THAT NO EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES EXIST

Based on information presented in this document and the project record, I have evaluated the resource conditions listed in 36 CFR 220.6(b)(1) and determined there are no extraordinary circumstances related to this project. The following resources were considered:

- **Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.** No concerns were found.
- **Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.** Stipulations to protect these areas are included in the project file. Crews will adhere to best management practices while performing the work. Special considerations will be given when performing gravel extraction, refueling, and storing fuel.
- **Congressionally designated areas, such as Wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas.** The project is not located in any congressionally designated area.
- **Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas.** The project area is not located within an inventoried roadless area, as this portion of the Upper Winner Creek Trail is located on non-National Forest land and under a Forest Service public easement.
- **Research Natural Areas.** This project is not located in a Research Natural Area
- **American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites, and**
- **Archaeological sites and historic properties or areas.** Tribal partners have been consulted. In 2018 the SHPO was consulted regarding this proposal and indicated a finding that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed trail relocation, with stipulations. Stipulations include that FS archeology staff would develop a monitoring plan for the site; work crews would use leave no trace practices and vegetative screening to obscure the site from trail users; and that if new archeological resources were discovered during implementation all work would cease until it can be evaluated by FS archeology staff.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public was given the opportunity to comment on this and all the other proposed FY2021 and



FY2022 GAOA projects, through a R10 interactive web map that was posted during the Fall of 2020. The comment period ran from October 22 to November 3, 2020 and there was public support for improving the trail. Comments are displayed in a static manner on the interactive map located here:

<https://usfs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=7965efeb81084a2a802c946b043e79a8>

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the 2020 Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan and will comply with all other laws and regulations.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision is not subject to the appeal or objection processes. Implementation of this decision may occur immediately.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Jason Stancil at Jason.stancil@usda.gov or by phone at (907)754-2317

Tim Charnon

Glacier District Ranger

Date

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